

DELAWARE RE-ENTRY EDUCATION TASK FORCE

September 26, 2014

9:30 a.m.

Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families

Multi-Purpose Facility, Building #9 (Conference Room 1)

1825 Faulkland Rd., Wilmington, DE 19805

MEETING MINUTES

Task Force members in attendance:

Ed Atwood, Justice of the Peace Court

Joanna Champney, Delaware Center for Justice

Kimberly H. Chandler, Dept. of Safety and Homeland Security

Nancy Dietz, Dept. of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families

Pastor Meredith Griffin, Harvest Christina Fellowship

Karl Hines on behalf of The Honorable Robert M Coupe, Department of Correction

Eliza Hirst on behalf of Tania Culley, Office of the Child Advocate

Frederika Jenner, Delaware State Education Association

Jennifer Kline, Family Court

The Honorable Chandlee Johnson Kuhn, Family Court, New Castle County Courthouse

Kendall Massett, Delaware Charter Schools Network

The Honorable Jennifer Ranji (Chair), Dept. of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families

Erik Raser-Schramm, Citizen Representative

John Sadowski on behalf of The Honorable Mark T. Murphy, Dept. of Education

Kim Siegel on behalf of The Honorable Matthew Denn, Lieutenant Governor's Office

Wendy Strauss, Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens

Others in attendance:

David Domenici, Center for Educational Excellence in Alternative Settings

Darrell Green, Brandywine School District

Angie Porter, Dept. of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families

Jon McAllister, Providence Service Corporation

Richard Morse, ACLU

Donald Patton, Christina School District

Malvine Richard, Christina School District

Cara Sawyer, Dept. of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families

Kelly Schaffer, Dept. of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families (consultant)

Theresa Sedive, Attorney General's Office

Mark Steele, Indian River School District

1. Welcome and Introductions

Secretary Ranji welcomed everyone to the meeting and facilitated introductions. Next, the minutes from the August 27th Task Force meeting were reviewed. The minutes were approved.

2. Report Outs from August Meeting

Secretary Ranji provided report outs as follow up to the August meeting. The update from DSCYF included the issue of credit transfer for youth leaving the system. Secretary Ranji stated we've focused on where kids go when they leave secure care, and the second piece to that is what happens with their records. At the last meeting we heard from youth who transitioned back successfully, and that young woman was in an ILC setting but was short in terms of the number of credits earned. Secretary Ranji noted the need to talk about how to get kids back into an appropriate setting and in a way where they can graduate on time. Next, she introduced Angie Porter to talk about credit loss and transfer.

Angie Porter described the process for educational diagnosticians reviewing student records. At times the process is straightforward and staff can call a student's school to get what they need. This is generally not the case for students who are frequently in and out of placements or who are in placements out of state. Ms. Porter noted some other states don't use the same Carnegie Units like Delaware and when this happens staff need to translate the credits for Delaware. Sometimes records from the placements won't say what level a course was; it will just say "English" or "science" and not mention what was covered. Ms. Porter reiterated that multiple placements or out of state placements make it difficult to track down records. It can be challenging to find out what was missed and recover the credits. She stated there is a better chance of keeping up with credits if students are at Ferris and then Cleveland White. She stated they have had better success with those students. In addition, Ms. Porter noted YRS has access to online credit recovery, NovaNet, through Pearson. She stated it is tough for kids to navigate and the Education Unit is looking to move to Edgenuity, which is more user friendly. The Education Unit can also issue credits on demonstration of mastery. For example, if a student has done three

marking periods of a course, instead of putting back through whole course they would take an end of course test. If the student were to pass with a 70 or better then they can pass the course with credit. It tends to be students with attendance problems who access credits through demonstration of mastery.

Secretary asked what is a Carnegie Unit. Ms. Porter responded it is credits based on hours of seat time. This unit is used in Delaware and requires 135 hours of seat time for each course, and students also have to meet the requirements of a course. Judge Kuhn stated seat time could be a barrier for our kids. Secretary Ranji asked what is transferred when a student leaves YRS. Ms. Porter stated YRS sends information to a youth's school about what requirements have been completed for specific courses. YRS doesn't issue credits, but there hasn't been a school who has ever said they won't accept the work a student completed while in care. The Education Unit lets districts know how credits were met. Secretary Ranji asked if we have situations where schools say a course isn't good enough. Ms. Porter responded that hasn't happened. She noted German 2 is an example of a course the Education Unit isn't able to offer. In other cases, the Education Unit can call a student's district and ask for information to continue the course (e.g. history classes). Secretary Ranji confirmed students would still advance while at YRS but would still have to pick those credits up if courses are not offered.

Secretary Ranji asked if there is a uniform way of getting a student's records and finding out what they need. Ms. Porter responded that districts have a sheet that shows what each student needs. For example, if its Indian River they will make contact with the guidance counselor to request a transcript, information on which courses the student could recover and what their current schedule would be if enrolled today. The Education Unit tries to keep students advancing while they go back to get their information. Ms. Porter stated the Education Unit

doesn't have access to transcripts online. The Education Unit has limited access to eSchool. The Education Unit has to call schools and ask them to send information. Secretary Ranji asked if transcripts are on eSchool and if the issue is we can't get them. A Task Force member confirmed. John Sadowski stated it seems like a process issue. Ms. Porter responded it would be helpful to have access to transcripts through eSchool and Mr. Sadowski said he would help try to find out more. Judge Kuhn stated it's the same issue for child welfare - if a child is in DFS, it is unclear what can be accessed from eSchool. It's a broader issue. Secretary Ranji responded that we have a school and teachers and it seems like the information should be gathered more easily. Judge Kuhn stated she saw Ms. Porter's work in court. There was a student on track for 2015 graduation, getting out of YRS on December 31. His counselor was amazing and was working with the student on taking the SATs and ACT. She is also working on college applications with him. Judge Kuhn stated the front end of the issue is knowing where students are when they come in. The back end of the issue is the question of whether the student will be okay going back home to their community and able to go to college.

Secretary Ranji asked for kids that go to a facility out of state, who gets the information and sends it to the district. Ms. Porter responded the Education Unit does that. Educational diagnosticians send information and make telephone contact. They review what the student was working on. She noted Chris McIntyre does frequent checks with the placements and is going to go on more frequent visits. Ms. Porter stated one person in the Education Unit does transitions. The Department just posted a second transition position internally. She said she would like to see the Education Unit specialists connect with schools to check on kids and make sure they are on the right track. Ms. Porter also noted they have trouble getting information from drug treatment programs, even those located within the state.

Cara Sawyer asked if since it's hard to find out what was done at a placement out of state, if it is also hard to communicate that information to districts. Ms. Porter responded it can be hard depending on how long the student has been gone. The Education Unit tries to look at what a student would've done in district and probe to find out more about curriculum used at the placement. No district has said they won't take the credits. Woodbridge has been phenomenal, and districts up state have been great as well. Ms. Porter stated her concern would be more for the student in terms the support they're getting for courses they'll be in when they get back.

Secretary Ranji asked if we know students are getting credits after transferring back. Ms. Porter responded she doesn't know if after 90 days any additional follow up is done. We don't know if the students earn the credits in the end.

A Task Force member asked what the barrier is to getting information about curriculum used at out of state facilities. Ms. Porter stated they provide generic information. Because they are working with so many kids at so many different levels, they may be trying to support students the best they can in a more general and integrated way. Judge Kuhn asked if we could require out of state organizations through their contract to share certain educational information with YRS. Nancy Dietz stated the requirements could be fleshed out more, and the Department could try to tighten up the language with the Contracts Unit. Jennifer Kline suggested going to day and residential treatment facilities in Delaware, as well as out of state, to find out what curriculum is being used. She provided an example of a behavioral treatment program in Dover where she observed a classroom setting. She asked the program about instruction materials and was told they get them from the district. Ms. Kline noted the need to ask what facilities are doing in order to understand what curriculum is being used. Ms. Porter responded that because some of those placements are mental health or behavioral, education services are often contracted out and youth

aren't getting a full-time program. Ms. Kline stated she observed a child who was having a hard time staying in the classroom and she felt like there wasn't a good investigation into why by the facility – whether it be mental health issues, not understanding the content, or boredom.

Secretary Ranji stated the Department could look into building in reasonable information sharing language into contracts with placement facilities.

3. Roundtable Discussion – District Run Alternative Schools

Secretary Ranji stated we invited representatives from school districts operating district-run alternative schools. She noted we've heard lots of data from John Sadowski about state-run alternatives. We also looked at data that Ms. Porter presented that showed many students weren't going to CDAP schools and were rather going to district-run alternatives. The Task Force didn't have a lot of information about the district run-alternatives and agreed having a roundtable would be helpful. Secretary Ranji noted that in advance of the meeting we sent a list of some of the topic areas we hope to cover. For example, how it is determined where the student goes (district run or consortium run or traditional school setting), who is involved in transition planning, outcome data, how students do educationally, as well as insights and challenges.

Darrell Green from Brandywine School District, Mark Steele from Indian River School District and Malvine Richard and Donald Patton from Christina are present for the roundtable. Secretary Ranji noted Colonial could not be here. The Department will follow up with Colonial to find out answers to the questions that will be discussed today. Mr. Green provided information about Brandywine School District's district-run alternative. He stated that the district contracts with Friend of the Family to run Brandywine Community School. The school serves elementary, middle and high school students, as well as runs a twilight academy for credit

recovery. They have a tiered intervention. District run alternative would be a first step intervention, rather than the step for most students transitioning back from YRS. Many students go to a consortium program as step down from YRS, mostly due to the level of supports that can be provided internally. Mr. Green stated the district looks at each student on a case-by-case basis for the best way to meet the needs of young adults. He provided an example of a student who transitioned back through the district alternative. The student came with credits but had lots of gaps, and had to do credit recovery. His initial schedule was well above his ability to comprehend and manage and had to be modified. He was able to acquire credits. At the district alternative they focus on counseling, behavior modification, academic needs, transition and support services. It is a 5-week program in the district alternative. Every 5 weeks a student's case is reviewed, and the student is able to transition back if he or she met the requirements. Mr. Green stated that the district looks at it as a Response to Intervention model – either behaviorally or academically. Secretary Ranji asked if the district operated alternative is used when something is going on in a traditional school. Mr. Green responded yes and noted it is referral based. He stated the school has to demonstrate they've exhausted every avenue of support in the traditional school before they can access the alternative program. A panel will review special education services provided and levels of support to a student and their family when making a decision. Mr. Green stated that in many cases they send students back to their comprehensive school and let them know they haven't exhausted resources. Mr. Green noted that 63 students came through the district alternative program last year. In some instances if the students come from an alternative setting within their school it can be a good opportunity. Secretary Ranji asked if kids coming out of YRS would go to a CDAP school. Mr. Green responded yes, or a feeder school. He stated it is a case-by-case basis. Mr. Green said the high level of support

provided in YRS creates a challenge because it's hard for a student to adjust when going back to a comprehensive school. There is a low percent of transition support. Mr. Green noted the structure and support doesn't match when students return to the traditional high school setting. When there are 1,100 students in some buildings it raises questions about who has the touch points. Mr. Green acknowledged students may be in contact with probation officers for supports, but they vary in their ability to engage with the schools. He said the transition piece is critical, because students are exposed to many of the same ills when they return. Secretary Ranji stated there are challenges reintegrating after being with YRS. We need to figure out who is doing what and how to build better supports. She asked if most students go back after 5 weeks. Mr. Green responded that it is based on need. Many students are comfortable in that environment, and the school offers individual and group counseling, which often isn't offered in a traditional school. A traditional school guidance counselor is a different role. Mr. Green stated the district alternative requires students to be at executive status, and some students will sabotage their progress in order to stay because it can be overwhelming to return to traditional setting. In addition, it can be harder for teachers in traditional schools to have meaningful relationships. In the alternative settings those relationships are bonded. Parents will also advocate for students to stay in the alternative setting. Mr. Green reiterated that this is why students' pathways are reviewed on a case-by-case basis. A Task Force member asked what is the longest stay for a student. Mr. Green stated the longest might have been a year, which was prior to him being there. He noted if it is deemed that the district alternatives are not meeting the support for a student then they look at other options. He stated there may be behavioral issues and the district run alternative can't provide that higher level of support. Mr. Green noted in those cases the district might recommend the student attend Parkwood or Kingswood. A Task Force member

asked how would there be higher level of support. Mr. Green responded that special education and mental health services are provided, which they don't have in the district alternative. He stated that for most part students are fairly successful, but they do sometimes have individuals requiring higher-level supports. A Task Force member asked how big the school is. Mr. Green stated part of the building is shared with Boys and Girls Club. He noted they have two classrooms for alternative to suspension – which is an intervention before alternative - where we try to be restorative to keep suspension off a student's record. Mr. Green stated they have an elementary room for up to 25 students, but usually there aren't more than 5. The middle and high school setting can serve up to 100, but there usually aren't more than 65. Judge Kuhn stated she was skeptical when first going to Brandywine Community School, but it was great. She stated it is not in the regular school but students are also not getting suspension on their record. Staff was supportive and trying to keep kids engaged. Judge Kuhn stated one size isn't going to fit all students. Mr. Green stated typically if transitions are done it is because of behaviors – for example, high levels of aggression.

Secretary Ranji asked how it is determined if YRS students go to a traditional school or CDAP school. Mr. Green responded that they have a transition meeting with the receiving school, including a social worker, and look at the student's case history. He said credits tend to be a huge issue in terms of where students are age-wise versus their expected graduation date. Consortium-based alternatives give more flexibility to meet students' needs for graduation. Typically districts have different requirements. Mr. Green stated a student could have come in from one district and now be in another district. Secretary Ranji stated if a student comes to a district with a credit deficit, then they probably came to YRS with that deficit. She asked if there is more opportunity to catch up through attending a CDAP school. Mr. Green responded yes.

There is a difference between having behavioral issues and a credit deficit. He noted they have a twilight academy for credit recovery in the evening for students to fill a credit gap. Young men and women coming from YRS don't usually have just a credit need. Mr. Green noted they look at the whole young adult to determine the supports needed. Joanna Champney asked if there is a similar process at Parkway and Kingswood in that student's cases are reviewed every five weeks. Mr. Green responded yes, and noted they are reviewed very marking period. He said the timing has to do with giving the programs an opportunity to work. There is ongoing communication with formal case review and for some students they could check in on a weekly basis.

Nancy Dietz asked what is the impact of the timing of kids leaving YRS. Mr. Green stated it's a major factor in deciding where students go. If a student comes back mid semester after having lost instruction those are huge gaps to fill and puts the young adult in a position to fail. It is hard for a student to make up half a semester. John Sadowski stated many people are used to the idea of having the same classes all year long. Now they have blocks where an entire years class is covered in the first half of the year. Some schools have 90-minute blocks where it's done every other day. 4 by 4 blocks are almost accelerated because there's more up front for the first half of the year.

Next, Mr. Steele spoke about Indian River School Districts' processes and shared information about their district alternative. He said credits are the most important thing and noted we have to keep in mind that if a student started 9th grade and then transitions and comes back to the district they still belong to a cohort and will be accountable for that graduation rate. Mr. Steele noted the district does everything to be able to catch up the students. In Indian River there is a wide variety of strategies. Both high schools have behavioral modification classrooms. Mr. Steele stated that the district has a limited number of out-of-school suspensions, because

they can control the environment better. If students get a 5-day out of suspension or more, there is an in district program at the GW Carver building. This is geared for regular education students. In some cases a student might be suspended one out of school day and then spend the remaining 9 days attend the GW Carver program. It would depend on the offense for where students go. Mr. Steele stated that geographically Indian River has the largest school district and transportation is a huge issue. He noted the C.A.M.P program is located in the southern most part of district. They continue work and use Ed Options, which is software for credit recovery. He stated this enables them to keep students on track so they will transition back to the high school. Students have group counseling in afternoons, and are often followed up with when they return to high school. Students in the C.A.M.P. program are in a short-term placement. A longer-term placement is Sussex County alternative school, which is operated by Woodbridge School District. Students with up to a 180-day placement would be sent to that school. For students transitioning back from programs like YRS into high school the district would look at length of time in the program. Standard expulsion is 45-180 days. Depending on the reason a student was in a facility, it could equate to a 180-day expulsion. Mr. Steele stated if information provided says the student is safe and has earned credits then they would go directly back to a traditional high school. If a student is short of that then the district would talk to Scope. A third component would be home-bound instruction. Mr. Steele noted this has only occurred once or twice. He stated that special education students go to GW Carver Academy. If a special education student and transitioning back then they would be brought into that program. Usually it is a 30-day program where students have academic structure. Mr. Steele stated they have added a new component to the program to make it more therapeutic. They now have a school psychologist, social workers and guidance counselors. The program has taken on the look of

Scope, where counseling is built into the school day. The academic schedule is geared toward Sussex Central and Indian River high schools. Mr. Steele noted that certain vocational programs aren't at Carver. The main goal is to get students back in and back on track and to maximize credits. He acknowledged they have a twilight recovery program). At Indian River a student can get 11 credits a year, maybe 12 with summer school. He stated they have been successful at keeping kids going and need good mix of services to meet their need. Secretary Ranji confirmed Scope is the CDAP program. The C.A.M.P. program is district-operated and it is short-term for students who are expelled. Mr. Steele stated Carver is district operated and is for special needs students. Secretary Ranji asked where kids are going who are transitioning out of secure care. Mr. Steele responded if the student is special education then he or she would go to Carver. If not, the student would go to Scope if Scope would accept them. If Scope doesn't accept the student then the district would offer home-bound instruction or hire an additional paraprofessional and bring them back to the traditional high school. Kim Seigel asked if the district looks to see if a student has an IEP and then sends them there. Mr. Steele responded it is not an automatic placement.

Malvine Richard described Christina's in-district program, the Douglas School. For the first time this year (2014-2015) the district has contracted with Providence. Providence oversees the program. Ms. Richard stated the school is not dissimilar to what was offered in past. They are able to offer more services, including a psychologist, educational diagnosticians and counselors. In addition, ratios are smaller. Ms. Richard stated the program is similar to what Mr. Green stated about Brandywine Community School. Christina uses the school for alternative placement, expulsion and support. She stated support might be when a decision has been made about a student's needs not being met in the traditional school. Then they send the student to a

smaller environment. Ms. Richard said the district has other programs. They have programs for social-emotional and mental health programs, two in elementary schools, two in middle and one in high school. She stated regular education or special education students could go to Douglass. Students are sent to Douglass to prevent an issue for alternative placement or expulsion. The district is trying to be proactive. Ms. Richard noted the district also uses the consortium schools, so they have three avenues to consider when students are returning from YRS. Christina has a transition educational diagnostician who works a liaison with the Department and with outside agencies. Before the district makes a decision, there is a transition meeting at the high school. The high school can then make recommendations about placement. Ms. Richard stated the high schools typically ask for students to not to come back for reasons such as timing. She noted they use the 45 day mark because of the marking period timing. Many students go to Douglass coming from an outside agency. Ms. Richard stated sometimes students transfer back into a traditional school. It depends on the credit situation and transcripts and testing and if the student can catch up. The district looks at whether the student would be better off going to CDAP or Douglass for more support before going back to a traditional school. For most students, if the district sends them to CDAP or Douglass they are sent for 45 days and then they are assessed. Ms. Richard stated that decisions are made with the student, family, schools and agency. Students have already done their time when returning and Ms. Richard noted they are not putting students in district alternatives for expulsion. Rather, they are putting them there for support. She stated they have had the same problem as Mr. Green mentioned, with students sabotaging their ability to go back to their home school. Students can remain and graduate from there, but they still graduate from their home school. Ms. Richard stated the district is transferring to Edgenuity for credit recovery and on-time credit.

Ms. Richard stated Christina has a school that is all mastery-based. Sarah Pyle Academy is designed for students not in trouble but who are behind on credits. Programs in Douglass are also mastery-based. Students are doing credit recovery and the district is not looking at seat time. If students stay and then transition back to a traditional school it is because they can manage. Newark High has 1,500-1,600 students and others are 800-900. Secretary Ranji asked if there are other programs used aside from Sarah Pyle and Douglass. Ms. Richard responded there are also two CDAP programs, Providence and Kingswood. Secretary Ranji stated YRS kids could go either to a CDAP program, Sarah Pyle or Douglass. Ms. Richard responded that students leaving YRS would not typically go to Sarah Pyle as it is for students behind on credits and not with discipline issues. Students or schools can make referrals to Sarah Pyle. It is for students 16-20 years old. Students who are referred have less than 10 credits and should be on track to graduate. In two years they can catch up. It is blended instruction and students work at their own pace. Ms. Richard noted if a student is behind then the purpose is to catch them up with the goal of being college and career ready. The program uses Common Core and is done through Edgenuity. The ratio of students to teachers is 12 to 1. Ms. Richard stated Douglass class sizes are also small. Many students who go to outside agencies are either special education or have a lot of gaps in their learning. She stated part of why the district sends students to a non-traditional school is to fill those credit gaps. That can't necessarily be done in a traditional school with teachers and pace of the courses. Decisions are made with the student and their families. Secretary Ranji asked how it is determined where students go between two CDAP programs and Douglass. Ms. Richard responded that in the past students have gone to Douglass following placement with an outside agency, but the district has also used CDAP schools. She stated it depends on what the behavior was that sent the child to YRS, their age and their needs.

Secretary Ranji asked where students with a more severe juvenile record would go. Ms. Richard responded the district would lean toward Kingswood. Kingswood has a good track record for students who have severe behavior issues. They try to keep the environments as level as possible. Mr. Green stated sometimes students have outstanding charges and haven't been adjudicated yet. All of those factors come into play when the decision is being made for where a student is placed. He stated they don't want to present barriers, but also have to keep in mind student safety and the security and wellbeing of everyone. When agencies have ability – particularly from Kingswood – they have their ears to the street and will round up students and get them into the schools. He noted the district wants to be as open as they can to make sure students get what they need. At some point students already have limited ability to move beyond high school and they need to look at how to develop soft skills. That level of attention and detail might not be available in traditional schools. Mr. Green gave credit to Mr. Sadowski and the Department of Education for their support in being able to do that. It is not a fluid process trying to determine the best pathway for students. Ms. Richard agreed. She stated when students come with expulsions they are often set up with home-bound instruction. Sometimes students are sent to Douglass while the district waits to see what the result of the expulsion will be. The district has to do expulsions in a certain amount of time, but it is the Board of Education that decides on expulsions.

4. David Domenici, Executive Director, Center for Educational Excellence in Alternative Settings (CEEAS)

Secretary Ranji stated in the group has been hearing from guest speakers and next month we will hear from the former founder of SEED School. We also have someone coming from the Council of State Governments. Today we will hear from David Domenici, Executive Director of

the Center for Educational Excellence in Alternative Settings. He has both policy and programmatic experience and was involved with starting the Maya Angelou School in Washington, DC.

Mr. Domenici stated he would be responsive to what he heard this morning. He started by speaking about statewide policy, and noted the issue of the Department's schools not being considered a district. They are providing the services of a school district except in their ability to leverage taxes. If the Education Unit became a school district, then the controversy about credits would go away, because they could issue their own credits. This could be a legislative change. The separate issue is how to get this done. Mr. Domenici noted that for foster involved youth, some states decide any student who meets a state set of requirements can graduate. The same could be done for juvenile justice involved youth. Secretary Ranji responded that Delaware has done that for youth in the foster care system. Mr. Domenici stated Delaware could amend the law and make it work for juvenile justice involved students too. It doesn't make sense to not have students graduate. Mr. Domenici noted Florida has passed a law, as has California, stating that court involvement may not be a consideration when determining what school the student goes to. Schools can look at things like special needs, but not court involvement. He noted that with the Maya Angelou School some traditional schools rejected kids when it was determined that the kids were in the secure care school. Secretary Ranji asked if districts would know about the behavior of a student. Mr. Domenici responded yes, they could. It would be possible to find out how many kids are serving time for in-school infractions versus out of school. In some cases the nature of a student's offense has nothing to do with success in school.

Next, Mr. Domenci stated he provides caution to those not in classrooms about credit recovery as a silver bullet. A significant number of credit recovery software are incredibly low

rigor, are more fact check based, and don't get to higher order thinking. A vast majority of kids in alternative schools sit at a computer and the teacher doesn't teach the class. Often kids search for answers in the online systems. He stated this doesn't mean instruction doesn't happen. The credit recovery systems are incredibly easy to cheat. Mr. Domenici acknowledged the need for technology and blended learning. Students will automatically have credits through credit recovery, but whether they will be able to do anything with those credits is a separate matter.

Mr. Domenici stated he was initially asked to talk agency-level or other options the state might look at, such as creating another alternative school. He stated it sounds like a lot of interesting high quality alternative schools are operating in Delaware. Mr. Domenici stated that generally mandatory alternative schools are low-functioning. He said this is for the same reasons that we put challenging kids together and away; it is hard to build in accountability measures. You are then creating situations with high numbers of kids with difficult behavioral challenges in one place. He questioned why, if students are developing positive behaviors and doing well, they would be put into a school with people displaying significant behavioral challenges. Mr. Sadowski asked to clarify if he was speaking about comprehensive or alternative schools. Mr. Domenici stated he is speaking about a mandatory transition from YRS to the alternative school setting. He clarified he hasn't been to any Delaware alternative schools, though he has been to many around the county. Many good ones are not exclusively mandatory placements. They are interesting alternative placements for kids who want something different. They are places where kids who need a different place go and parents want their kids there. Some kids may have been bullied at a previous school, or may be special education, or may be juvenile justice involved; however they are not there because they *have* to go there. Mr. Domenici stated he would urge the state to think the one or two things students seem to be interested in and keep them in school

for that purpose. Use that as well as an analysis of special needs to think about placement.

Students will most likely be successful because they've found something they are interested in.

Secretary Ranji stated the group talked about the idea of looking at a charter or another type of school that would be voluntary for youth leaving secure care settings. The group hasn't talked in depth about this possibility in terms of what it would be. She asked if there is an issue with having a school limited to kids coming out of secure care. Mr. Domenici responded it's difficult on a long-term basis to run a robust school designed specifically for kids coming out of the juvenile justice system. It is hard to get the human capital and keep the level of rigor. The school might have good therapeutic programming but then academics tend to lag. If that same school is attractive to a range of young people – and has small classes, engagement with adults, creative arts and other interesting things – then you end up with a less dense high needs population. But, the school would still work for that high needs population. You would have a range of people that are excited to go there, and not because it's the school for kids coming out of Ferris. It would be different than returning to a district or throwaway school.

Kendall Massett stated Delaware has the Positive Outcomes Charter School. It serves special needs, at-risk kids and kids transitioning from a home school situation. She said we have an example of a school that has worked in the state and she would like to see that replicated to help take away the stigma of kids that have been in that type of situation. Mr. Domenici responded that the reality is maintaining a school defined by a population who bring a lot of needs can be difficult.

Next, Mr. Domenici stated with regard to residential placement schools, there is no reason why they shouldn't be required to do course alignment. Before a student comes back to Delaware they should be completing alignment. Even if not district-specific, a student would

come back with information to align with state requirements. A vast majority of residential placements have good therapeutic services and are not as great for academics. He recommended Delaware use contracts to get what the state needs.

Mr. Domenici next discussed the issue of mid-semester transitions. He acknowledged no one really wants to keep youth at Ferris longer than we need to, but it does merit consideration. He stated there might be bed space and other issues, but it doesn't make sense to release a kid two weeks before the end of a semester. From a policy and practice matter it could be addressed. He stated it also doesn't make sense to get released on September 15. Kids who are in care over the summer could be thoughtfully released before the start of school. He responded to the previous example about students going to alternative schools for 3 weeks, and suggested they might be kept in care for those three weeks.

Mr. Domenici stated we know months in advance when a kid is leaving secure care, and you can start saying in a more granular way what is going on at the high school during the month of transition so that the students can access the appropriate courses and textbooks. He acknowledged the state could have a clearly articulated plan so that mid-semester transfers work. Kids transferring back wouldn't be any more behind in their classes than kids who are marginally succeeding in the courses. He provided the context that kids who move from another state don't get told to go to alternative school before entering the traditional school.

Mr. Domenici then spoke to the idea about piloting a thoughtful, strong package of supports to help kids succeed at non-alternative schools, unless the alternatives are high-functioning and right for kids. He noted we can't have kids show up with their transcript and assume they will succeed. The month before a student's transition Ferris could meet with the school, including the special education coordinator. The student can get his or her schedule and meet their

counselor. For schools that are likely placements for students leaving secure care the agency could say we will embed someone at the school. In turn, the principals would get a person to help with the most at-risk kids in their school. The person would help kids get to school, and could hold a class to get the kids together. The school would get an FTE they don't have to pay for and who has good street sense. This program plus intensive mentoring could be an interesting way to spend dollars instead of alternative schools.

Mr. Domenici described the transition process that was used at the Maya Angelou School. The process is articulated weeks and months in advance. Almost every kid coming out of Maya Angelou School has done a site visit and has someone go with them to school on the first day. No student gets just a transcript to take with him or her. He suggested the state could look at different mentoring models.

Lastly, Mr. Domenici stated kids come with very different academic needs. If a kid needs two credits to graduate and is 18 years old, then it may make sense to get him into evening credit recovery. That is different than a kid who is 17 and reads at a third grade level. It is hard for an alternative school to address all of that. He stated when he first started his work in DC at Maya Angelou they were asked to run a program inside the facility and a transition center school on the outside. The program was small and couldn't have enough range of programming, and some students never wanted to leave. For a lot of kids having a mandatory transition means having to develop another set of relationships. It can be hard to make those few weeks valuable. There are different expectations for kids depending on their age and needs. It's hard to do all of the things that a variety of kids want in a program.

Secretary Ranji stated there wouldn't be one pathway and one recommendation. The state is looking at what we can do and need to do with each slice. She asked Mr. Domenici if the Maya

Angelou School is still in the facility and also a transition school. He responded it is charter high school that meets all of the standards for an alternative program, and there is a young adult center for older students. The school is inside the facility. The transition center morphed into a young adult center because that's what they thought made more sense. The transition gap was not effective. They now work on getting students from the facility to the right placement for them. Judge Kuhn asked how the transition center is working. Mr. Domenici responded it is 18 months in and it's working well. It doesn't have enough job or vocational training, but it's a standalone charter. Secretary Ranji asked if a charter alternative might be juvenile justice and neighborhood kids. He responded yes, and more open than other charters in the city. There's not a policy like other charters about not accepting students after a certain date. A Task Force member said funding is an issue in DE. Mr. Sadowski asked if there is criteria that says if a student is coming from a YRS program, or can prove they are bullied, for example, to get preference. Mr. Domenici responded that they haven't tried that in DC. He stated you might run into less opposition with giving preference for specialized kids. Ms. Massett stated the Positive Outcomes program has preferences, and they may be able to put a policy in about kids coming from YRS. Mr. Domenici stated the school gets standard per pupil funding, and also adult education funding. So as a young adult charter you can enroll older students – funding is less, but you still get funding for them.

Secretary Ranji thanked Mr. Domenici for coming to today's meeting and sharing his valuable insights.

5. Next Steps

Secretary Ranji stated that at next month's Task Force meeting the former founder of SEED School would speak with the group. We will also have Elizabeth Seigel from the Council of

State Governments. We will also start drafting recommendations. Finally, she noted the alternative school visits are coming up.

6. Public Comment

No public comment.

7. Adjournment